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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANJUL 000212

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DAKAR PASS RAO, DAO, AND ODC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/06/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KMCA](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR ON AFTERMATH OF
COUP ATTEMPT, MCA, SENEGAL

REF: A. BANJUL 206 AND PREVIOUS
[B](#). BANJUL 209
[C](#). BANJUL 190

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) In April 6 meeting with senior presidential adviser, Secretary General Njie, Ambassador reiterated our concern

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over reports of detainees' mistreatment, detention of National Assembly Speaker and others, and private newspaper's closure in connection with the recent aborted coup attempt. He repeated our request for consular access to Amcit detainee Tamsir Jasseh. Njie took note of our concerns, denied any GOTG intention to crack down on opposition parties, and undertook to work to get us access to Jasseh. Ambassador also registered concern over GOTG's slippage in performance on criteria for MCA eligibility. On Senegal, Njie said the GOTG awaited a full explanation from the GOS as to its knowledge and actions prior to the coup plot's discovery; when Ambassador stressed need for restraint so as to avoid escalation of tensions with GOS, Njie said the GOTG recognized this and would act accordingly. The reported detention of the Speaker, the country's number-three official, is particularly noteworthy. END SUMMARY.

AFTERMATH OF COUP

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador met April 6 with senior presidential advisor, Secretary General Mambury Njie, reiterating U.S. opposition to any attempt to change governments via unconstitutional means such as the aborted coup attempt here March 21 (ref a). At the same time, Ambassador noted our concern over reports of beatings of detainees suspected of involvement in the plot and repeated our request for access to Amcit detainee Tamsir Jasseh. He also noted reports of authorities continuing to pick up suspects, saying we were informed of the April 5-6 detention of the National Assembly Speaker, Sherif Dibba, and detained Amcit Tamsir Jasseh's lawyer, Mary Ann Denton, who is affiliated with the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP). (NOTE: We subsequently learned of the detention of several officials with the National Intelligence Agency, including newly appointed Deputy Director General Ngor Secka. END NOTE) Referring to the recent closure of the private journal, "The Independent," and detention of its general manager and its

editor-in-chief, Ambassador added that we would also be concerned were the GOTG to use the failed coup plot as a pretext to crack down on the opposition parties or critics generally. With The Gambia scheduled to host the AU Summit within a few months, he added, the GOTG could hardly afford to isolate itself with such a crackdown.

13. (C) In response, Njie denied any plan by the GOTG for a crackdown on the opposition parties or others. He said he would work on getting us access to Jasseh and stated that the GOTG's objective was to investigate suspects as promptly as possibly and release those cleared of involvement, noting the release of 17 persons so far (ref a). Asserting GOTG's recognition of need for proper treatment of detainees, Njie said he had not been aware of cases of beatings and undertook to raise the matter with the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Col Lang Tombong Tamba, who, according to Njie, was in charge of the ongoing investigation into the failed plot. Njie stated that he would also raise with Tamba the reported detentions of the National Assembly Speaker and others. He undertook to look into the closure of "The Independent."

MILLENIUM CHALLENGE ACCOUNT

14. (C) Ambassador mentioned GOTG officials' participation in the recent "MCC University" program in Washington and meeting with AF DAS Linda Thomas-Greenfield. He shared his impression that the discussions had been open and frank and that U.S. officials had pointed to worrisome signs of slippage in the GOTG's performance on the criteria, particularly in the areas of "ruling justly" and "economic freedom," used to determine MCA eligibility. Pointing out that MCA eligibility had to be renewed annually, Ambassador stated that the GOTG needed to be prepared to discuss its performance during the upcoming MCC visit here and that the Embassy also wished to stay in close touch with the GOTG on this dossier. Njie responded that he had yet to receive a detailed readout from the GOTG's participants in the MCC

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program, but stated that they as well as the Gambian Ambassador in Washington had informed him of our concern over the slippage in the GOTG's performance.

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15. (C) Referring to President Jammeh's message to President Bush on Dakar's alleged involvement in the failed coup plot (ref b), Ambassador asked Njie if the GOTG had concrete evidence of such involvement; Njie replied that the evidence consisted of references in the televised confessions of suspects here to a Senegalese hand (ref c) and Dakar's initial silence when the coup plot was uncovered. When Ambassador noted the GOS statement condemning the coup, Njie stated that the GOS had made the statement only after prodding by the GOTG envoys sent to Dakar. Following the envoys' visit, Njie continued, the GOTG still awaited a full explanation by the GOS as to its knowledge and actions in advance of the coup plot's discovery. Ambassador stressed need for restraint as the GOTG pursued the matter with the GOS, noting that an escalation of tensions would not serve the interest of either side; Njie responded that the GOTG recognized this and would do its part to keep the issue from degenerating into a new crisis with its neighbor.

COMMENT

16. (C) The detention of so senior an official as the National Assembly Speaker -- affiliated with a political party in alliance with the ruling APRC party -- is particularly noteworthy; the reasons for his and the other April 5-6 detentions are as yet unknown. Despite Mary Ann Denton's opposition UDP party affiliation, at this point we see her

detention as linked to her status as Amcit Jasseh's lawyer rather than to her opposition party membership; according to a knowledgeable source, authorities took her into custody to question her about Jasseh's comments to her about the coup plot prior to his being picked up. Regarding possible Senegalese implication in the failed plot, Njie indicated GOTG's awareness that it remained fully occupied with its investigation of domestic involvement and hence could ill afford also to become enmeshed in a crisis with Dakar by pushing its far more powerful neighbor too hard on its alleged role. END COMMENT.

STAFFORD